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ABSTRACT

A pilot program was designed to provide opportunities for a group of high-risk parents to improve their parenting. Specifically, the program provided a center in which teenage mothers could meet, share child-rearing problems, observe their children being cared for by trained personnel, interact with their children, and have opportunities for discussion. Additionally, the program helped high-risk parents eligible under provisions of the Job Training Partnership Act to develop skills necessary for successful infant and early childhood daycare provision and to become licensed caregivers. Program goals included the following: to teach uninformed parents about children's normal growth patterns and individual needs, to develop coping strategies, to enhance parents' self-esteem, and to model nurturant and developmental care. Initial participants were 15 mothers (ranging in age from 15 through 20 years) and 18 children. Discussion focuses on: the purpose of the program; a rationale for parent-child intervention; program characteristics, including the assessment of participants; the planned course of instruction; and experience gained in the first 6 weeks of program implementation. Experience with program participants suggested that the women are in a period of crisis characterized by helplessness and alienation, that they have given up on the system, and that parental patterns are reproduced across generations. (RH)

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AN INFANT/TODDLER PROGRAM FOR HIGH RISK PARENTS AND THEIR CHILDREN

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ABSTRACT

This study would provide parents involved within the project, a foundational base with reference to normal growth patterns of children, individual needs, understanding of appropriate coping strategies, enhanced self-esteem, improved nurturant comprehension, and advanced developmental care procedures.

Contained within these educational-training goals are the primary objectives of this research. The first research objective is to ascertain those unique factors that separate high risk adolescent parents from non-adolescent parents. A second objective is to determine which educational-training elements encourage improved parenting behavior of both groups over an extended period of time. A third purpose is that of determining the relationship between adolescent parents knowledge of child development and their childrearing attitudes. A fourth purpose is that of equiping young uniformed parents with child rearing techniques that will enable them to provide such care to the community through employment in early childhood care programs.

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AN INFANT/TODDLER PROGRAM FOR HIGH RISK PARENTS AND THEIR CHILDREN

I. PURPOSE

This pilot program is planned to offer opportunities for a group of high-risk parents to improve the quality of their parenting. Among the goals of the program are: to teach uninformed parents about children's normal growth patterns and individual needs, to develop coping strategies, to enhance their self-esteem, and model nurturant, developmental care.

Early childhood programs are non-threatening sources of information and support for parents faced with the common problems of child rearing. According to a report by the National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect, the importance of an early childhood program as a treatment resource is well accepted as a means of supporting parents and, consequently, preventing child maltreatment. (Children's Bureau, DHEW publ. No. OHDS 79318, Aug. 1979)

The program proposed here had two major components. One was to provide a center in which parents, in this case, teenage mothers could meet each other, share child-rearing problems, observe their children being cared for by trained personnel, interact with their children and have opportunities to discuss what they have seen and other problems they are encountering. The second was to offer the opportunity for high-risk JTPA eligible parents to develop skills which are necessary for successful infant and early childhood daycare provision and to obtain a license to operate and maintain a facility or to work in an established facility. The goals of the program include: to teach targeted high-risk teenage parents about children's normal growth patterns and individual needs; to develop coping strategies; to enhance self-esteem; and to model nurturant, developmental care procedures.

Early childhood licensure programs generally involve two years of preparation for certification. The rigor of these standard programs preclude admission of the high-risk teenage parent and many other JTPA eligible categories (including teenagers) who could gain employment in early childhood care programs. This program is designed to remedy such preclusions.

The program, therefore, addresses the needs of the young parents including teenage parents to learn accepted child care and child rearing techniques enabling them to understand child rearing and equip them to provide a needed service in the community: the care of infants and toddlers other than their own.

The program will help meet the needs of the ill-equipped targeted high-risk parent who is often virtually unable to enter the job market. Teenage parents are especially lacking in academic training, self-confidence, and a clear understanding of life goals and would benefit greatly from a program in which everyday learning experiences with their babies could be used to develop skills which could also provide the means of earning a livelihood.

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Over 30 JTPA eligibles including teenagers are referred to the existing child care program at Antelope Valley College each year. The rigor of enrollment requirements preclude many from enrolling in the traditional program. This proposed program eliminates these barriers of the special needs group.

II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Three assumptions formed the rationale for parent-child intervention studies developed under the aegis of the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare in the mid-1960's. One assumption was that the early years are vital, possibly constituting a critical period to later cognitive and social development. (Bloom 1964) The second assumption was that parenting is a learned behavior and varies according to cultural and socioeconomic setting. The third assumption was that improving the parent's self-concept subsequently would benefit the child's development.

The data generated by these studies support the notion that the children who benefitted the most from the early intervention programs did so because parents were an integral part of the process and the parent's self concept was enhanced. (Caldwell 1971, Levinstein 1972)

Research into child rearing practices in recent years substantiates the notion that a variety of influences affect parenting behaviors. Stolz (1967) stated that "any act of a parent with her child is the result of the interplay of pluralistic pressures. (Stolz, L.M. Influences on Parent Behavior)

Brody (1973) investigating mother's responses to "typical" behaviors of children, concluded that "infancy is a luxury for some children". Mothers who were ill equipped, either emotionally or financially to care for their young, may have been unable to provide a beneficial environment for the child. (Minet & Price 1977)

There is increasingly strong evidence that what happens to infants, and particularly toddlers, is crucially important in determining later problem-solving skills and personality characteristics. (White and Watts 1973) The spaces, materials, and nurturance very young children receive are significant and do make a difference.

Honig, citing Research in Review (Young Children, May 1984), noted that the prognosis for the development of children of teenage parents is more negative than for other age parents. These children were more likely to manifest reading and learning difficulties by age five. Also cited in the same article is research by Choquet et al (1972) in France who found that "parents of children found to be at high risk for developmental problems had themselves been more frequently, as children, in the care of others rather than their own parents in comparison to parents of children not at risk". Among the classic family circumstances which are reported to place infants at risk are:

(a) an unwanted baby
(b) father absence
(c) single parenting without support of another adult
(d) emotional illness or depression of parent

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(e) a drug-addicted parent
(f) abusive, violent parents

It is well accepted that the causes of child abuse are many and varied. Kempe and Kempe state that: "No one knows quite how the ability to be a parent is passed on from one generation to the next. The mechanics by which abusive parents repeat the parenting actions to which they were exposed are common to us all; it is only the nature of the patterns which differ". (Ruth & Anthony Kempe, Child Abuse, p. 13) "Crucial to the relationship is the parent's perception of her child--how he should behave and what his needs are at a particular age". (p. 14)

Clearly, programs in which parents observe and participate with their children are an excellent means of presenting and modeling alternative parenting behaviors. They can be an effective means of ameliorating the problems of parent and child which contribute to abuse and neglect.

III. THE PROGRAM

The time required operates in conjunction with the existing child care program at the college targeted JTPA people to enroll for licensure and complete in a much shorter time under special instruction arrangements.

Training sessions address work maturity measures as appropriate to the local work ethic. Goals and objectives were to be performance based. The basic criterion for determination of success is certification as a daycare provider or continuing on in school.

Supervisory personnel teach and model appropriate work procedures, attitudes and techniques while involving the students in self-evaluation skills such as accepting criticism, developing good peer relationships, and assuming responsibilities involved in good daycare provision.

Participants: 15 mothers and 18 children are enrolled. Training is to be 9 weeks in duration. Parents of infants have met Monday and Wednesday for two hours and parents of toddlers, Tuesday and Thursday for two hours each day. The age range is from 15 years of age through 20 years of age.

IV. METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURE

A. Students meet twice per week. One hour is spent with their children, interacting with them and observing teacher methods with the children. The second hour is spent in class while children are cared for by the teacher aides and supervised by the director and head teacher.

B. Measurable objectives and activities have been designed to meet the JTPA requirements. Objectives and activities are planned for the entire 9 week session. These are listed as follows:

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OBJECTIVES	ACTIVITIES
1. Students will learn about requirements for licensure as a daycare provider and will be able to fill out appropriate applications.	Sample forms and procedures will be demonstrated and practiced under the guidance of the supervisory staff.
2. Students will learn to keep accurate records required for good child care provision.	Attendance will be taken at all sessions by students and maintained up to date.
3. Students will plan a daily schedule for infants and toddlers taking developmental needs into account.	Students will plan activities for the children and participate in the program under the guidance of the supervisory staff.
4. Students will learn the basics of prenatal, antenatal, infant and toddler nutritional needs. They will be able to identify the four basic food groups.	Through lecture and demonstration, students will develop skill in planning low cost, balanced diets for infants and toddlers. They will become familiar with the best formulas and commercial foods as well.
5. Students will be able to plan a safe environment for infants and toddlers.	Students will evaluate and critique their own environments and develop guidelines for a safe place for infants and toddlers.
6. Students will learn basic health rules and their importance. They will be exposed to data on effects of drugs, alcohol and smoking on young children.	Through lectures, films, and demonstrations students will develop competence in assessing the effects of various drugs, alcohol, and smoking on children. They will develop a chart depicting these debilitating affects on young children.
7. Students will be exposed to child development theory.	Students will observe children and apply theory to their interaction with their children and others.

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8. Students will develop coping strategies with infants and toddlers in day to day situations.	Students will practice coping skills and strategies through their day to day interaction with the children, under the supervision of the director and teachers.
9. Students will be able to learn managerial skills.	Students will use sample forms in order to develop skill in completing insurance forms, application data, learning how to set fees. They will practice writing simple reports to parents and learn to conduct a simple interview.
10. Students will develop increased self confidence through being able to earn a livelihood.	With the supervisory staff as models, the students will engage in activities which foster good peer relationships, develop self evaluation skills. Through participating and completing the course to accept responsibility.

C. Diagnostic assessments were administered by the Prescriptive Learning Instructor at Antelope Valley College. The following is the Instrument Selection Rationale prepared by him.

CONSIDERATION:

Early discussion by members of the program led to the consideration that the student (young mother) would be intimidated by a lengthy, formal test situation. Moreover, it was taken into consideration that all students are unfamiliar with the college and its functioning. The least threatening test situation was felt to be most appropriate.

OBJECTIVE:

The primary objective by assessment is to determine basic academic skills (reading, math) and gather information about work attitudes and feelings about self-concept. The following instruments meet the above consideration and objective most completely.

READING: (Reading Progress Scale)

The RPS, published by Revrac, normed on a community college population, and used at several community colleges as a reading proficiency screening instrument, provides a brief check of reading skill utilizing the cloze method in a timed (7 minute) format. The test has four passages with readability levels ranging from 1st to 3rd, 4th to 6th, 7th to 9th, and 10th to 12th grade level. Students passing section three (7th to 9th grade level), for the purpose of this program, are determined to have minimally adequate reading skill.

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MATH: (Wide Range Achievement Test)

The WRAT, published by Jastak Associates, is used extensively in public education throughout the United States. Exhaustive data is available on all age groups. These test consist of arithmetic problems ranging from lower elementary to college algebra. Test administration time is ten minutes; results provide diagnostic information as well as grade level equivalency, percentile rank, and standard score. Students scoring below the fifth grade level in the program are determined to have inadequate math skills.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT: (Janus Career Planning)

The JJP-CP, published by Janus Banks, was developed for eleventh and twelfth grade students to provide a subjective measurement of a student's relationship to the work world and feelings about self. Students answer several questionnaires (reading level at 6th grade) that get at student attitudes about work experience, working conditions, work interest, self-esteem, personality, and confidence. The questionnaire-inventories provide a profile to be discussed with the student. The instrument affords much information about a student in a non-threatening manner.

INTERVIEW: (Specific Concerns)

Each student received a twenty minute interview. The objective of the interview was to transmit amicability, discuss results of testing, allow the student to express any concerns, and make recommendations for support services.

COMPOSITE PROFILE OF TESTING:

Reading: Reading skills were adequate to good for 75% of students (10th to 12th grade comprehension). However, reading was barely adequate for 25% of the students (7th to 9th grade level). One of the deficient students was determined to be learning disabled.

Math: The mean math score was 7.2 grade level (adequate) and the range varied from 3.6 to 10.6 grade level. Many students were severely deficient in fractions, percentage and decimals. Math skills were clearly inadequate for one student and barely adequate for two others.

Personal Development:

Work Experience: Students rated caring-helping and clerical as their greatest experience.

Environment: The most preferred working conditions were as follows: Indoors, in one place, with people, active, casual clothes, varied tasks, semi-skilled, and not supervised.

Self-Esteem: The mean score of 52.2/80 fell into the average range. Three students rated themselves very negatively. These same three student were determined to have basic skill deficiencies. Moreover, 60% of the students feel their parents were seldom or never proud of them.

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Work Interest: Students rated caring-helping and clerical as their greatest interest.

Confidence: The mean score of 61.3/80 was an average to good score. Again, scores for the academically deficient students were low. Many students said they looked forward to doing new things.

Personality: The mean score of 55.1/80 was in the average range. More than 50% of the students said they make friends easily can get along well with people.

INTERVIEW: (Concerns)

All students expressed a strong interest in and love for their child or children. Their child (children) appeared to be a positive focal point in their lives. However, all students expressed some insecurity about the awesome task of raising a child. Students were very enthusiastic about the program. Concern related to student-parent relationships were common. Students often felt disapproval and severing of communication by parents. Students also felt society in general was not supportive or approving of them. Moreover, several students experienced severe anxiety over role expectations set for them by their spouse or parent.

In the area of education and work, all students expressed concerns. Several students needed to satisfy requirements for a high school diploma. All students desired a career of some kind. Careers ranged from Daycare Provider to a career in business. Some students hoped to satisfy career goals almost immediately, while others looked to five or more years in the future.

Recommendations: (Support Services)

The following support services were recommended:

Small group discussions, led by Betty Bellman and Betty Tilton, emphasizing peer interaction and child care skills, explanation of the college basic skill policy and course requirements for certificate or degree, self growth classes, (Personal Development, Career Planning, College Survival Skills) basic skill improvement class (Learning Skill 90), G.E.D. preparation workbooks, family counseling, assessment for determination of a learning disability, and counseling at the Darryl McDaniel Independent Living Center for self-help skills.

OBSERVATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS:

1. All of the students (young mothers) in the program are very enthusiastic. They relate very well to one another and are obviously experiencing much more approval than they have been accustomed to. The friendships that they are forming appear to be very important to them.

2. The students demonstrate a genuine caring and love for their children. They have a real interest and desire to learn about their child/children. Moreover, the students truly enjoy each other's children. This interaction is very enjoyable to witness.

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3. The small group discussions led by the staff are very productive. Students are gaining valuable insights, good judgment, techniques and strategies in caring for their children; and very importantly, they are sharing of themselves. Students are taking risks in that they are sharing concerns and feelings that have heretofore remained buried. It is a very accepting setting. I am very impressed with the skill of the staff and the growth of the students.

4. In interviewing the students, they all appear to have a strong desire to improve themselves. Some students see a career in child care or business as an immediate goal. Others are planning to raise their children to school age and then pursue a career. At least three students have excellent college potential. They could complete about any program they desire.

5. Finally, the warm, accepting atmosphere of the program is clearly the ideal setting for student (young mother) and child development. There is general agreement that the program has been an excellent learning experience and that the center is a refreshing place to be.

D. Journal: A journal was kept by the director and teachers. Observations and program notes were kept in detail. Weekly staff meetings were documented. Participants were followed up throughout the program. When a mother was absent she was called by a staff member and encouraged to continue in the group. This has proved to be successful in retaining the population.

Video-taping of interaction between mothers and children, children and children, staff and mothers and staff and children, was begun in the third week of the program. Although the participants were aware that this would be happening, their hesitation was respected and taping began when they had settled into the program.

Course Plan:

Feb. 11	Program begins; Infants and Toddlers together; Orientations.
Feb. 12	Toddlers; Life skills management.
Feb. 13	Infants; Life skills management.
Feb. 14	Toddlers; Stress.
Feb. 19	Toddlers; Assessments with Dave Greenleaf.
Feb. 20	Infants; Assessments with Dave Greenleaf.
Feb. 25	Infants
Feb. 26	Toddlers; Guest Lecturer, Mary Kelso on Nutrition, 8:30 - 9:00
Feb. 27	Infants
Feb. 28	Toddlers; Guest Lecturer, Mary Kelso on Nutrition, 8:30 - 9:00
Mar. 4	Infants; Guest Lecturer, Mary Kelso on Nutrition, 8:30 - 9:00
Mar. 6	Infants; Guest Lecturer, Mary Kelso on Nutrition, 8:30 - 9:00
Mar. 5	Toddlers; Toilet Training, Autonomy
Mar. 7	Toddlers; Language, Communication
Mar. 11	Infants; Child Development: Use the video tapes of program to stimulate discussion.
Mar. 12	Toddlers; Child Development: Use the video tapes of program to stimulate discussion.
Mar. 13	Infants; Separation Film: "Mother Love".
Mar. 14	Toddlers; Separation Film: "Mother Love".

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Mar. 18 Infants; Guest Lecturer, Joanne Kay on Career Opportunities.
Mar. 19 Toddlers; Guest Lecturer, Joanne Kay on Career Opportunities.
Mar. 20 Infants; Managerial skills.
Mar. 21 Toddlers; Managerial skills.
Mar. 25 Infants; Guest Lecturer, Sue Albert on Pediatrics.
Mar. 26 Toddlers; Guest Lecturer, Sue Albert on Pediatrics.
Mar. 27 Infants; Safety factor and health.
Mar. 28 Easter Party and Egg roll with invited guests.
Apr. 8 Infants; weaning, toilet training and parent expectations.
Apr. 9 Activities
Apr. 10 Infants; Viewing of video tapes of program with discussion.
Apr. 11 Toddlers; Viewing of video tapes of program with discussion.
Apr. 15 Pulling it all together; needs assessment and evaluation.
Apr. 16 Daycare license applications.
Apr. 18 Goodbye and discussion of future plans.

IV. FINDINGS

The program is now two-thirds of the way towards completion. It has been an extremely engrossing learning experience for all of us.

An important aspect of the program has been that the procedure was of great importance. As has been stated, the program was developed with a targeted population, based upon input from various community organizations and agencies.

It became apparent immediately that the mechanics of the start-up of the pilot program was all-important. Although there were more than 300 babies born to teenagers in the Antelope Valley in 1984, (at Antelope Valley Hospital/Medical Center) we were surprised at the difficulty we encountered in contacting these people.

The names and addresses of the participants on our lists proved to be ephemeral. Telephone numbers were out of order, people had moved out of the area. Responses to queries to hospitals, agencies and such were that these people were "notoriously unreliable".

Nevertheless, we persevered, using every publicity means available, We printed 300 flyers which were hand-carried to the above mentioned agencies, along with physicians, psychologists, and family counselors. They were also posted in various places around campus and the community. The director gave two radio interviews which were run for one week each. The work was also spread by word of mouth. Announcements about the program were made at A.A.U.W. meetings and various community organizations. A paid advertisement was run in the local newspaper.

The results of this appeal for participants were very interesting. To our surprise, we had an enormous response from people outside the age group. All of these people expressed a need for such a program, stating there was no other place in this area in which they could learn parenting skills and get this type of training while interacting with their children. We took their

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names and phone numbers indicating that there might be an additional program later on which would have different variables.

Five weeks after beginning the program, we have 7 mothers with toddlers, and 9 mothers with infants. All of the participants entered the program with a great deal of trepidation. On the first day they sat with their coats on and didn't take the coffee or refreshments offered. They were like "good little girls at a party". The first week was a time of building trust between mothers and staff, and children and staff. Therefore, much of what was done was aimed at making both mothers and children comfortable in the environment. Whereas we had a notion in designing this program that we'd be meeting the needs of both parents and children, it's become clear that this is indeed so. We're modeling nurturance on two levels, in that we are mothering the mothers, and by so doing we're enabling them to mother their children. The program we designed to enhance their life skills has taken this concept into account. In the first week we managed to wean the mothers from their children so that they would leave them to go into the next room. We reassured them by having a staff member move back and forth between the two rooms telling them that all was well with their children. It was very apparent that the mothers were very anxious about leaving their children with anyone.

An example of modeling mothering behavior occurred in the 2nd week. The infant group mothers were discussing feeding and daily baby care. The instructor demonstrated the uses of a baby food grinder which the mothers were very impressed with. After the session they went back to their children and used the grinder to prepare a banana snack. Each mother then fed her baby. One mother stooped down to her baby and began to spoon the mashed banana to him. He turned away from the new food and she got some on his face. "Ooh", she said, "he doesn't like it, it's icky!" I sat down on the floor next to the baby and said to the mother, "Here, I'll hold the bowl while you get a tissue". She got up and while she was away, I offered the baby a bit of the banana mash on a small spoon. He tasted it and opened his mouth for more. She returned to see this and sat down next to me to watch. Then, I gave her the spoon, suggesting the small amount at first, and she was elated that the baby successfully finished all of the food in the bowl. Although this mother was receptive to information, her own lack of skill was impeding her mothering. It was a real breakthrough for her to accept that her lack of skill could so affect her interaction with her child.

Also in the second week, the mothers began to feel more comfortable about leaving their children. The children were taken outdoors. The play tunnel was used with great success. The mothers were impressed by how well the children played together.

On the third day of the program the Infant group met. Mention was made of the video taping. There was some suspicion that they were being video taped through the mirror on the wall. Dr. Minet assured the whole group that this was not so and they were told that they well all know when the taping is going on. Cloth versus disposable diapers were discussed. The food grinders were used; bananas were mashed. We felt strongly that the mother's feeding style would reveal much about her relationship to her child. This notion was supported by several incidents. For instance, one mother appeared never to have fed her child--he lives in a foster home and she picks him up there to bring him to class. One mother went to her car to get an infant seat as she

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said her child couldn't eat without it. Interest in food grinders was evident. The mothers practiced using the grinders themselves and many indicated they'd like to have one at home. One mother who refused to leave her baby, did so for a while, but came in when he cried. We began to see, as the mothers got more comfortable, that they were willing to listen to teachers. A beginning of confidence became evident. One girl told her mother that she loves the class so much she wishes she could come every day.

By the end of the 2nd week of class, the anxiety of the mothers was much diminished. They seemed comfortable to stay in class, thus class was held longer. The young women began showing a real interest and willingness to learn and they began to share experiences with each other.

In the past five weeks there has been a steady improvement of trust in the staff. The head teacher noticed that the students don't seem to be afraid to ask questions about everything. They listen to the advice given and seem to take it to heart.

The subject of smoking "pot" came up in class discussion. The students all stated that they had certainly given up pot as soon as they knew they were pregnant.

There has been appreciable change in attitude on the part of the student-mothers. They are beginning to socialize with each other. They have begun to confide in the staff members. They've begun to leave their children willingly and in fact to enjoy the time away from them without feeling guilty. The procedural problems and mechanics of the program continue to present themselves. We now face a problem of one young woman who brings two others to class, who is meeting resistance at home with bringing the car. This problem will effect three students continuing in the program. A primary recommendation for further programs will be to provide transportation for those who need it.

There have been some interesting changes in the children which the mothers have begun to notice. Some children live in apartments and don't have much outdoor playtime. These children enjoy the outdoor playtime so much it's hard to get them to come in when playtime is over. One toddler who had been very "clingy" came in and began to play autonomously and continued to do so for the rest of the session.

Discussions reveal a depth of feeling about their situation. Many feel defeated about their lives. When I mentioned that the program was half-finished, they expressed extreme dismay. One girl said, "I'll just go back to where I was!" Another said, "This is the only place my husband lets me go!"

I reminded them that they have begun to move out of their enclosed situations and that we will also open other avenues if they will allow it. A college counselor met with them in the 6th week and outlined the various possibilities they had for added schooling. Three women have asked about summer school classes; two plan to get their G.E.D.

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V. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS

Three prevailing themes have emerged in this pilot program. These themes relate to the mothers view of the world, their view of themselves, and their view of their role as parents.

1. The first theme has to do with helplessness and alienation. The women are in a period of crisis. Adolescence itself is a time in which one's identity is being challenged and evaluated. Erikson speaks of identity vs. isolation. In these young women, one discerns the conflict of the interaction of childhood and adulthood with little opportunity for resolution of the conflict of identity occurring in adolescence. Therefore they are poorly prepared for the emotional demands of motherhood. They feel helpless and unable to make decisions because they have little experiences in negotiating successfully with parents, boyfriends, husbands and siblings. The child has a child and has difficulty in integrating her dual role of child and parent. The women have taken this course, therefore, for several reasons. One is to learn a skill, another is to learn how to care for their children and others, and another which they repeatedly claim to share their experience with others in the same predicament. A prevalent attitude expressed is that "life does things to them", rather than them taking action to change their lives.

2. The second theme, related to the first, is that they have given up on the system. They perceive little support from the community or larger society. They feel that the social welfare system is unfair, that it's out to take their children from them. There is much anger at the welfare system. In one of the sessions, the teacher was discussing this issue, that of coping with the system. This led to a flood of conversation. In one case, the mother insisted that she had never abused her child, yet the child was taken away. There was general agreement that social workers are unsympathetic, uncaring and "mean".

One mother, stating that she had to move out of her mother's house, claimed that she couldn't because she needed a thousand dollars to get into an apartment. When HUD was suggested she replied, "You need to wait a year". When asked if she had gone down to apply she said, "No, my friend told me".

The responses to sessions on household budgeting, menu planning, finding the best buys on clothes, food, etc., were positive but the mothers indicated that there was never enough money and they didn't know how to get more. Topics which drew most discussion were: The nastiness of creditors and how to deal with them. They expressed the opinion that the telephone company shows no mercy. Students questioned if the state checks criminal or traffic violations should they apply for licensing.

3. The third theme is that parental patterns are repetitive. As was stated earlier on, parenting is a learned experience. The women in this group had little or no positive parental models, consequently they are ill-equipped to be parents themselves.

In our discussions, the mothers refer to their need to have a close relationship with their own mothers, and their disappointment in not achieving this. Many of them are repeating a pattern; i.e. a woman with a child in a foster home was in a foster home herself as a child. A woman who sees herself

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as needing protection in the form of a husband, often lacked the kind of father who would provide this. Several are children of single parents themselves.

The deprivation they encountered resulted in rebellion, anger (unresolved and unrecognized by them) and immature patterns in their search for love. One girl stated that her mother's repression and expressed fear that she would go and get pregnant drove her to run away at sixteen and do just that. She stated that she never felt loved or accepted; she never could please her mother.

Several of the young women revealed that they encounter anger from their parents if they want to have some fun. An example of this anger and frustration at their predicament is revealed in the following incident. One of the mothers was discussing a trip to Disneyland. Another mentioned that she had been to Disneyland when she was pregnant and wasn't able to ride the rides and have as much fun as the others. She went another time, with her baby, and again couldn't ride the rides because of the baby. Their expectations are unrealistic.

Thus, the cycle of abuse becomes established. The mother has the child to satisfy her own needs for love and thereby sets up unrealistic expectations of life as a parent. (Kempke)

Studies suggest that many adolescent mothers have inaccurate expectations concerning child development. They tend to underestimate or overestimate the importance of developmental milestones such as smiling, babbling, and later ones such as walking, talking, potty training. Negative child rearing behavior relates to the mistaken information and notions they have about children. Why is this devastating? Clearly, the adolescent mother needs to give up the fantasy of childhood in order to become an adult mother. The young woman who continued to go to Disneyland was reluctant to do this. Surely she would know that the baby or pregnancy would limit her activities. Yet, here is the crux of the problem. She is loathe to give up her "fun" because she hasn't really had any in her life and her experience with her parents hasn't shown her another way of life. She is still operating as a child even though she has a role as a mother.

Recommendations

1. Time. Certainly 9 weeks is not enough time to affect change. Nevertheless, there is an emerging trend towards opening the vista in the women's lives. It is suggested that: A continuing program be developed which would maintain contact and which would include an older group of parents for possible comparison.

2. Funding should allow for transportation where needed. Two of the neediest participants had to drop out because they had no means of getting to the college.

3. A resource center should be established where the women could come for referrals, information and contact with others. The center would have a lending library for books, materials and toys.

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ANTELOPE VALLEY COLLEGE

DIAGNOSTIC ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

Learning Skills
Dave Greenleaf
Feb. 1985

STUDENT
BD
SS

COLLEGE OBECTIVE:

ACADEMIC SKILLS

Reading:

(Wide Range Achievement Test)

(Reading Progress Scale)

Comments:

Math:

(Wide Range Achievement Test)

Comments:

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

Janus Job Planner: Career Planning

CAREER PROFILE:

Experience -

Environment -

Interest -

SELF-CONCEPT INVENTORY

Self-Esteem -

Confidence -

Personality -

RECOMMENDATIONS (Support Services):

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"Self-Esteem/Confidence/Personalitv"
"Work Interest Inventory"
"Working Conditions Inventory"
"Work Experience Inventory"